

September 25, 2007

**Statement By Congressman Pete Stark
Honoring former Congressman Charles Vanik**

Madam Speaker, I rise today to join Congressman Klein in introducing a resolution to honor former Congressman Charles Vanik. Charlie was a dedicated public servant and a great man. From 1955 to 1981, he served the people of Northern Ohio with distinction and is an exemplary example for those of us in public office of what it means to be a true representative of the people.

It is hard to say whether Charlie was best known for his signature black suits and bowties or his sponsorship of the now famous Jackson-Vanik amendment to the 1974 Trade Reform Bill. The former made him instantly recognizable throughout Northern Ohio and in the corridors of Capitol Hill. The later, which tied the former Soviet Union's trade status to whether it freely allowed Jewish emigration, allowed thousand of families to escape religious persecution. I personally will always remember Charlie for his strong work ethic and his tireless defense of the American working and middle class.

Charlie spent his 26 years in Congress pursuing policies that gave the American people opportunities to achieve their dreams and rejecting those that allowed corporations to dodge taxes and shirk their responsibilities to their employees. He was so adamant about representing the people instead of interest groups that, after winning reelection in 1970, he vowed to never accept campaign contributions again. Charlie was beholden to no one for his congressional seat except the people of Northern Ohio, and it showed in his politics. He returned to Washington time and time again not because of his ability to fundraise, but because of his ability to pass meaningful legislation. Some of his greatest victories included: the section 13 summer school lunch program, the predecessor amendment to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Great Lakes pollution clean-up, a Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the original CAFÉ legislation, tax reform measures and Social Security and Medicare improvements.

When Charlie passed away late last month, the United States lost one of its greatest leaders. However, Charlie's legacy can be seen in the 110th Congress as we continue to protect our delicate environment for future generations, guarantee all of our nation's children receive the

care they need, and ensure that all people receive adequate healthcare and can retire with security. As one of his former staffers – and later one of mine -- Bill Vaughan, recently wrote, “Like his black suit and bowtie, Mr. Vanik was a classic.” Charlie was a one of a kind leader and I hope today’s generation of members can learn from his steadfast pursuit of policies that helped everybody in our nation achieve the American Dream.